



CFSA Fact Sheet



LaShawn A. v Williams

Child Welfare Lawsuit Paved the Way for Reform

- **1989:** The American Civil Liberties Union filed *LaShawn A. v. Barry* over the quality of care that the city was giving abused and neglected children in its care.
- **1991:** After a two-week, non-jury trial, U.S. District Judge Thomas F. Hogan found that the city's child welfare system was "in a shambles." The city and the ACLU reached an agreement, signing the first of several versions of a consent decree that spelled out a schedule of specific changes.
- **Dec. 1992:** When it became clear that the city could not honor the terms of the initial *LaShawn* agreement, the ACLU filed the first of three requests that Judge Hogan hold the District in contempt of court.
- **May 1995:** Judge Hogan ordered the District to relinquish its authority over a \$53 million-a-year program that cared for about 5,000 abused or neglected children, marking the first time any court in the nation seized an entire child welfare system.
- **Apr. 31, 2001:** D.C. Mayor Anthony A. Williams named Olivia A. Golden, a former assistant secretary at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, as his nominee to head the District's child welfare agency. (Golden started work in a transitional role in mid-May and was confirmed by the D.C. Council a few months later.)
- **May 22, 2001:** Judge Hogan ended his six-year control over the District's child welfare system, signing an agreement to turn the agency over to Mayor Williams in June 2001. The *LaShawn* plaintiffs accepted this action contingent upon a probationary period in which the District would have to demonstrate its capacity to operate and reform the child welfare system.
- **June 2001:** For the first time, the District established a stand-alone, cabinet-level agency responsible for child welfare, the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA).
- **Oct. 2002:** The court-appointed monitor reported that CFSA had met 75 percent of 20 performance goals and recommended an end to the District's one-year probation in operating child welfare.

- **Oct.-Dec. 2002:** The plaintiffs and court monitor established an Interim Implementation Plan to govern CFSA performance while negotiating a final Implementation Plan with District officials.
- **January 2003:** Judge Hogan accepted the court-monitor's recommendation and formally ended the District's one-year probation in operating child welfare.
- **May 2003:** The court monitor submitted the Final Implementation for District Court approval. Judge Hogan approved it May 15. Meeting requirements of this blueprint for reform will vastly improve the local safety net for abused and neglected children and troubled families and will allow the District to end the lawsuit in 2007. n